



Exploring Sports Media: A content analysis on Japan and the United States media coverage during the 2015 Women's World Cup Final

Jennifer Villamar,^{1*} Timesha Smith²

¹School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Address 601 University Dr., Old Main 102 San Marcos, TX 78666 etc., ²Center of International Studies, Address Derrick Hall 101 601 University Dr. San Marcos, TX 78666 etc.

*Email: jennyv9530@yahoo.com or j_v160@txstate.edu

Received on 06/05/2019; revised on 07/11/2019; published on 08/18/2019

Abstract

This paper will be comprised of the following problem(s) and or topic(s) for this abstract. Coverage on the women's national soccer team for Japan and the United States during the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup final and the type of media coverage each team received during these events and prior to final. Also, how the media and its platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are used to promote the finals, teams, players, games, and viewership. It will be a comparative analysis dealing with Japan and the United States about the type of media coverage the female teams have throughout this event.

Keywords: media coverage, comparative analysis, qualitative content analysis, FIFA Women's World Cup, USWNT, Nadeshiko,

Introduction:

The first women's World Cup initiated a rivalry that would continue modern times. The 1991 tournament brought the United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) and Japan's Nadeshiko face to face for the first time. Their faceoff would take place during the group stage of the tournament. The USWNT would be victorious in the first of several battles between the two teams with a score of 3 to 0. The U.S. team would then go to become the first ever World Cup winner for the women. Fast forward to the 1995 World Cup, Japan and the U.S. would meet again, this time during the knockout stage. While the U.S. looked to prove they indeed were the superior soccer team once again, Japan looked for redemption. Yet, as history often repeats itself, Nadeshiko would again be defeated 4-0 by USWNT. The feud would be paused during the 1999 World Cup, as the teams did not face one another. However, Japan once again had to watch the USWNT go on to win their second title win. The two teams would not meet again until the 2011 World Cup final in Germany.

With the spirit of competition in the air, Nadeshiko and the USWNT went back and forth in battle with no clear winner in sight at the 2011 World Cup. Every goal scored was met with a counter until the game ran out of time with a tie of 2 to 2. This would lead to a penalty shoot-out, with Saki Kumagai scoring the winning goal for Japan. This match between these two world-class teams would go to become the most viewed soccer match of all time on ESPN. The match held the attention of 10.4 million Japanese and 13.5 million US viewers alone with 38.9% being female [Nielsen.com]. Both countries saw an increase in viewership during the penalty shoot-out; 21.1 million US viewers tuned in while over 15 million people watched the Japanese victory [FIFA]. After the teams congratulated one another, it was seemingly understood the rivalry was far from over as each team now held a world

cup victory over the other. Luckily, they would not have to wait long to meet again.

In 2012, the teams would once again do battle, this time during the London Olympics. The game, viewed by an attendance record audience of 80,000 people, was highly anticipated. With the stakes high, the aggressive battle came to an end with USWNT winning and earning a gold medal in soccer for the fourth time while, Japan came in second earning a silver medal. While each team would congratulate one another, the 2012 Olympic match and an encounter at the 2014 Algarve Cup in Portugal in which they tied 1 to 1 would be the fuel leading to the 2015 World Cup.

The 2015 matchup between the USWNT and Nadeshiko, is the most viewed women's soccer game in history. Media proclaimed it to be a "perfect storm," as the game caused there to be an influx of coverage, better marketing compared to previous World Cups, spectator increase (including more women watching the game), and more (Jensen, 2016). The success of the World Cup will inevitably lead to more women in sports receiving equal if not more hype, specifically from the media and fans. However, while the viewership of the match was an overall success, this study will look to compare how each country's media outlets represented their respective team as well as their World Cup final rivalry. By comparing the two countries, it shall be shown if the reporting media were able to give a neutral analysis of the final. As well as how the two teams were viewed, appealed to the audiences and how it will lead to an increase in viewership, sponsorships, and the overall marketing of women's soccer. Lastly, there will be an attempt to understand how media coverage brought larger audiences by analyzing the types of promotion for the game.

Research Questions

General objective:

Why was media coverage of the 2015 Women's World Cup important?

Did the media coverage of the 2015 Women's World Cup have an influence on today's rivalry between the teams from the United States and the Japanese?

In-depth question(s):

How does the role of social media coverage of the 2015 Women's World Cup affect the outlook of society on women's soccer?

Conceptual Framework

An issue within the broad concepts and or framework for the framing theory is that it has an agenda of its own. Even though it assists society in obtaining information and or an idea about an issue at hand it does it with dual intention. The theory is very important and influential especially at a larger scale. It controls what is being presented and manipulates the coverage to best suite its interests. It tends to shift the audiences focus to a particular array of frames "ideas, events, and topics" that will be covered (Davie, 2014). The theory itself is unavoidable as its seen and heard throughout the means of communication whether that is in traditional media or social media.

The present study compared two soccer teams (U.S and Japan) and their variation of coverage in both countries during the final. Using both teams, the present study centers on the framing theory, which "encompasses the idea that the mass media helps mold society's view of events through their coverage or lack of coverage of particular events" (Tuggle, 1997). That being said, it provides "what is seen, heard, and read, along with the type and amount of coverage given" (Pederson, 2002). In this case, the difference in coverage depends on what country is covering what team, what is being written, and what information is left out.

Two newspapers were selected to be analyzed one from each country [The Washington Post (U.S.) and The Japan Times (Japan)] in order to compare the coverage and representation of the U.S. and Japan's Women's National Team during the final. By focusing on one newspaper from each country it emphasizes the type of sports media coverage for that team in the analysis and limits the generalization of the Women's World Cup final. Therefore, this study will use framing theory as its basis by identifying the difference between both teams coverage during the World Cup final and the impact that had on television viewing trends, targeted spectators, and social media presence.

The use of framing theory as a concept and or framework for this study is appropriate in that it will best analyze the type of coverage being produced for both the U.S. and Japan's Women's National Soccer teams during the 2015 Women's World Cup final. The framing theory assists in determining the differences in coverage, how it affects and influences the audience's perception of the two teams. The use of headlines, font size, length of stories and pictures will determine the significance of each team being covered and the type of coverage it receives. Whether it is positive, negative, or neutral. By using this theory in the analysis it will allow the audience instead to draw its own conclusion and perception of the two teams.

Literature Review

Soccer is "the game that captivates the rest of the world" but for the U.S. Women's soccer team it's the other way around; the world is captivated by their game and shire dominance on and off the field (Coche, 2016). In 1986, the U.S. Soccer Association created the USWNT where they built, developed, and founded the legendary "American style" playing formation "3-4-3 system" (Halloran, 2013). By the first ever Women's World Cup held in 1991 the USWNT were bringing a new and different style of play to the tournament. It was here that they won "all six of their games, outscoring their opponents...in the process" and winning the 1991 World Cup (Halloran, 2013). In the 24-year history of Women's World Cup the USWNT have conquered the world of women's soccer. From domination, to heartbreak, glory, transition, controversy, shock, and resurgence the USWNT have seen it all ("Team USA," 2015). The USWNT have become a "dynamic global force in women's soccer" (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018). With its

FIFA ranking standing at "No. 2" in the world this is a team to be reckoned with (Bieler, 2015). They are the only team and "country to have reached the semifinals of every FIFA Women's World Cup" to date ("U.S. Soccer," 2015a).

With three world cup wins (1991, 1999, 2015), and four Olympic medals (1996, 2004, 2008, 2012) under their belt this is a team whose power lies in their game plan, skill, talented players, and cunning techniques. The USWNT are highly motivated and have evolved from a "more athletic and direct style" to mixing "in more possession play" (Reuters, 2015a). It is no wonder the team's strength lies in its "power, organized way of playing, and desire to win" (Murray, 2015). The players that had been selected were well experienced and confident they had what it took to win the World Cup. The team was comprised of "11 of the 13" original members from the 2012 Olympic games as well as veteran players "Christie Rampone (5th World Cup), Abby Wambach (4th World Cup) and Shannon Boxx (4th World Cup)" (MLS, 2015b). These individual players and the team have become the "steward of U.S. tradition" (Brewer, 2015). They are as irreplaceable as the team's history throughout the tournament. The USWNT's most well established players Abby Wambach and Hope Solo also began setting the foundation for the next generation of players throughout the tournament. These women's accomplishments and legacy "mirror the progress of American women's soccer" (Brewer, 2015). The younger players are given the opportunity to play and prove themselves in the tournament. Clearly, this demonstrated in the finals with the spotlight on rising star Carli Lloyd, winner of the Golden Ball award [given to the overall best player in the tournament] (Bieler, 2015).

To the USWNT, the 2015 World Cup was their way of "avenging the heartbreaking loss to Japan" they experienced four years ago at the 2012 Women's World Cup final (Brewer, 2015). The final was amongst the "highest TV ratings of any soccer match (men or women) ever aired in the United States on a single network" with "17 million viewers tuned for the final's 7 pm EDT start... swelled to 21 million by 8 pm and just 23 million by 8:30 pm" (Velasco, 2015). There were more than "2.8 million tweets about the USWNT and the World Cup" circulating after the final (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018). These numbers are a clear indication of the U.S. women's team domination both on traditional media (television screen) and social media (Twitter, Instagram).

Compared to other sports "soccer is still relatively unimportant in the U.S.," especially women's soccer (Brettman, 2015). For the U.S. Women's team the challenge began with them being "underreported...represented by sports considered socially acceptable for women" and "at worst non-existent in traditional media" (Coche, 2016). Not only were they underrepresented but they were also faced with stereotypes for being a woman in a male dominated sport. For the first time in the soccer world "Nike started selling jerseys for the Women's World Cup-winning team in men's sizes, quashing a long-running double standard; men's team jerseys have sold in women's sizes for years" (Harwell, 2015). "There is always an evolution, there's always a process to go through before equal footing is gained," which is something USWNT head coach, Jill Ellis, has seen span through her soccer career both as player and coach (Harwell, 2015).

The Japanese Women's soccer team or Nadeshiko became their countries heroes after winning the 2011 World Cup. Nadeshiko or pink flower is "associated with the traditional concept of Japanese female virtue" and is the Japanese Women's soccer team's nickname ("Japan Reacts," 2015). The team was fighting not only to win but for their country, that had just survived a major earthquake and tsunami month's prior. Unlike the USWNT, the 2011 champions prefer a more relaxed approach to soccer; with the team's strategies relied mostly on speed, short passes, and not falling. In addition, because Nadeshiko's team is small they often play and practice amongst the men's team ("Women's World Cup," 2015).

The women's soccer league has been in Japan since 1989 making Nadeshiko's legacy one of the oldest in the world. In its early years, Japan's women's team saw many advertisers willing to sponsor them. However, as the 1990s faded so did the popularity of women's soccer in Japan. Post the 1990s, men's soccer began getting more recognition from the media, leading veteran players like Seijin Ninomiya to say the "Japan Football Association and, in turn, the media never actively promoted women's soccer" (Brasor, 2011). Much like the U.S. team Nadeshiko

eventually faced under representation and stereotypes in soccer. The team despite uplifting the moral of Japan after winning in 2011 were subjected to fly economy to the London Olympics because according to the Japanese Football Association (JFA) they were not professional players like the men (Orlowitz, 2012). Despite the challenges, Nadeshiko is the only soccer team in Japan to have made it to the finals and have a World Cup victory.

The 2015 World Cup final, averaged 11.6 million views, while it was not as large of a draw as the U.S., the game did show an increase of 1.8 million viewers compared to 2011 (FIFA, 2015). With an earthquake having devastated the country [on June 2, 2015] a matter of days before the tournament started [on June 6, 2015] the games were “broadcasted locally on Fuji TV” and public viewings were held throughout Tokyo in “stadiums, halls, sports bars, Kameda Medical School, and parks” (“Where to View,” 2015). Nadeshiko relied “heavily on the experienced players” with 17 of its 23 players having played at the 2011 World Cup in Germany (“Reigning Champion,” 2015). “Japan has the second oldest squad in the tournament,” right after the USWNT (McKirdy, 2015a). The team came into the final defending their title confident that this World Cup would be their back-to-back win. Although Japan had possession of the ball “52%” of the time with the U.S. only had it for “48%” they kept letting the ball slip away giving the U.S. the upper hand so quickly in the game causing them to score (FIFA, 2015b). Though Nadeshiko was defeated and lost their title the team’s coach Norio Sasaki was proud of his players, especially that they “never stopped running until the end” (“U.S. dominates Japan,” 2015). Nadeshiko’s reaction to defeat was that they had to improve their “passing style, individual quality, and judgment” as players and as a team (McKirdy, 2015b).

With a long time rivalry came a long time respect for one another. In what seems like a rivalry for the books that will be “forever linked in women’s soccer lore” both teams have created a dynamic atmosphere in which in order to be the best, you must beat the best (“U.S. Soccer,” 2017). The USWNT and Nadeshiko have come a long way since their first encounter and just like that both teams have evolved overtime. Japan winning the 2011 World Cup was a turning point. It not only was the “first Asian team to win the Women’s World Cup” but “everyone in the world realize that having the ball has a big part to do with being successful” and “that it does not “matter how big or strong you are, the technique part is a massive part of the game” (Reuters, 2015a).

“Winning the final and finishing runner-up are two different things,” (“U.S. dominates Japan,” 2015). Nadeshiko recognized the USWNT as a worthy opponent with a quality team and players whom they have come to respect and admire. Both teams are have had the opportunity to play each other in two consecutive world cup finals where they have helped “develop women’s soccer in the world” (Goff, 2015). Japan’s head coach Sasaki and USWNT head coach Ellis both agree they influenced one another from their style of play, to their ability to grow as individuals and a team (Goff, 2015). However, there is still a “core differences between the two teams” (Reuters, 2015a). Each team has their own valuable assets that make them great. For the U.S.’s their “strength and power” lies in how “organized they play, their desire to win,” while Japan’s lies in their “skills, technique and also network among players (Reuter, 2015a).

Women’s soccer or any sport in which women partake has always been followed with sexist stereotypes and scrutinizing players based on their looks instead of how they play. In the past, women’s sports were “given less dramatic coverage, fewer cameras, less airtime all of which might help explain why the sport is overlooked in the first place” (Harwell, 2015). Over the past 10 years, “portrayals of women athletes have become increasingly respectful,” admirable, and influential (Cooky et al., 2015). In 2014, women’s sports received “about 2 to 5 percent of all sports coverage...less than even in 1989” (Harwell, 2015). For once “playing like a girl means you’re a badass” (Wagner, 2015). During the World Cup, there was more focus on “play and strategy,” which “indicates its level of acceptance in the sports world” (Velasco, 2015). The USWNT and Nadeshiko have become role models inspiring young girls to play the sport and chase their dreams. At the end of the day the sports story needs to be “dramatic” enough in order to “captivate the public’s attention,” which is exactly what the 2015 Women’s World Cup final did (Brettman, 2015).

The 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup took place in Canada from June 6 through July 5, 2015, in which “24 teams lined up for the very first time in the competition’s history, 52 games were played,” and only one would emerge victorious (FIFA, 2015). The U.S. and Japan met in a “World Cup for the fourth time and second straight time in a final” (“U.S. Soccer,” 2015b). Early on in the tournament Japan came in defending its title as current world champion winning all six of its games against Switzerland, Cameroon, Ecuador, Netherlands, Australia, and England only to lose the last game against the U.S. in the final. The U.S. on the other hand played against Australia, Sweden, Nigeria, Colombia, China, and Germany only winning five of the six games and tying one game. The USWNT scored “four goals in the first 16 minutes, including a hat trick,” then Japan counterattacked with two goals but it was not enough with the U.S. scoring one more goal winning the game and title of world champions (“U.S. dominates Japan,” 2015). It was the first time in sixteen years that the USWNT had won a World Cup. The USWNT became the first team to win all three titles and “the highest scoring final in tournament history” beating Japan 5-2 (Fox, 2015).

The 2015 World Cup tournament was broadcasted through traditional media well as through the use of new media (or digital media). For the U.S. it was broadcasted on “FOX USA, Futbol de Primera, and Telemundo,” while in Japan it was on “Fuji TV, Dentus Inc., NHK” (Kantar Sports, 2017). However, even though these channels broadcasted the games it did not necessarily mean that they had all the rights provision to television, radio, mobile, and broadband Internet. In the U.S. only the media rights licensee FOX USA had access to all the rights provision [television, radio, mobile, broadband internet], whereas the other media licensees Telemundo (NBC Deportes) only had rights to three of the four (television, mobile, and broadband internet) and Futbol de Primera with only one of the four (radio) (Kantar Sports, 2017). Meanwhile, in Japan only the media rights licensee Dentsu Inc. had access to all the rights provision (television, radio, mobile, and broadband internet), whereas the other media licensees Fuji TV and NHK only had one of the four (television) (Kantar Sports, 2017).

With the final airing on major television networks they were able to reach a greater viewership. Ratings in the U.S. for the final game “topped even the viewership of this year’s NBA Finals or Stanley Cup” (Harwell, 2015). The U.S. “recorded the second highest reach globally with 61.4 million people” meanwhile, Japan recorded the third highest in which they achieved “an audience reach of 47.2 million” (Kantar Sports, 2017). The most watched match through the tournament was the final with “52.6 million fans live while another 8.1 million spectators view it on a delayed basis” (Jensen, 2016). Though the U.S. overall had a greater reach globally than Japan the average live match audience was greater in Japan (Fuji TV) with “6,508” than in the U.S. (FOX) with “3,909” (Kantar Sports, 2017). Nonetheless, it had a greater global reach through the various platforms from television, to cell phones, online access, streaming, and instant coverage something significant to the tournament. FIFA estimated that “86 million watched at least part of the FIFA Women’s World Cup online or on mobile” (Jensen, 2016).

As it was a Women’s World Cup it was expected that more women would watch the tournament compared to men. It would be assumed so as the USWNT is more popular and successful than the U.S. men’s team however, that was not the case. In the U.S., more men watched the matches live then women “59%” to be exact compared to “41%,” while in Japan more women watched the matches live then men “52%” compared to a mere “48%” (Jensen, 2016). There was also an expectation that a great part of the viewership was comprised of the elderly who had followed and kept up with both teams from the start, their wins, and the rivalry for years. Meanwhile, majority of the U.S.’s audience that watched the live match were either in their midlife “33%” (35-49) or senior “33%” (60+), while Japan’s was either in their midlife “27%” or senior “59%” (Jensen, 2016).

Social media’s presence in the World Cup was a game changer. From Twitter to Instagram everything is simply a click, tweet, or post away. These platforms such as Twitter allowed athletes to “portray themselves in a particular light they can largely control,” while Instagram allowed for, “self-presence in non-athletic ways... and emphasizes on personal content” (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018). This not only created a “media outlet for communication purposes” but it

drew in a wider fan base allowing them to “gain direct access to their fans” and broader global audience (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018).

From the start of the World Cup, the USWNT became a fan favorite amongst the Americans so it was no surprise that they “received more mainstream and social media coverage during the tournament” (Burch et al., 2017). Both teams knew the significance of having a social media presence at the World Cup, which is why Japan opened their Instagram account one day prior to the tournament kick off (JFA, 2015). The USWNT and Japan Football Association (JFA) social media official accounts posted a series of pictures or tweets with the hashtags #USA, #JPN, #USAJPN, and #fifawwc throughout the tournament and the final. It was used to communicate the “critical movement in the life of the sport” and the teams “ongoing advancement” or journey before, during, and after the World Cup (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018). With live updates the audience and fans are more connected than ever with the latest information, goals, and play-by-plays on the games.

Whether that was by tweeting about the games, wins, disapproval of synthetic grass (for the tournament), equal pay or simply capturing a moment the athletes were “often showing a candid approach to communication as opposed to a polished performance” (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018). Fans were able to engage by re-tweeting self-presentation messages from the USWNT and JFA about the games, victories, and defeats. In the USWNT’s case they also used the platform for promotional purposes with endorsements especially after their World Cup win. With “859 tweets (32.9%)” before, “774 tweets (29.6%)” during, and “979 (37.5%) after” the tournament there was certainly a lot to tweet about at the 2015 World Cup (Hayes Sauder & Blaszk, 2018).

Justifications

Based on the literature review, it was noted there was a large amount of American sources available; this meant the USWNT had far more articles to go through and to collect information from. However, for Japan we found ourselves often lacking information. This is likely because there are articles that were not available to us in the states. Some articles were expired online, so we were not able to obtain any information that might have been useful. Perhaps the biggest hindrance to our studies was the language barrier. Because neither one of us could speak Japanese, we were restricted to articles from Japan predominately in English. This meant we possibly missed out on a variety of Japanese style writings about the final. The earthquake in Japan also served as a limitation to the research. We hypothesized Japan likely had few articles about the Women’s World Cup in 2015 because the country was more concerned with repairing the damage from the 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Information we were able to gather often lacked opinions about the other teams this made it challenging at times to understand how each country’s media felt about their competition.

By studying media coverage during the 2015 Women’s World Cup an emphasis on women’s sports is being shown. This is needed because typical sports are viewed from a male perspective. However, because Nadeshiko and the USWNT proved women could headline, there has to be a study to show why. The need for an analysis on what made the 2015 World Cup final game a success very much is the answer to what will make future women’s soccer games successful. The need for understanding the role media coverage played during the finals could also be used to determine if that created the intensity that was felt throughout the match. Without media coverage over the years, would the rivalry between Japan and the United States women’s teams have been such a huge draw?

Specific Research Questions

In the present study we asked the following question:

RQ1: How does media coverage of the FIFA 2015 Women’s World Cup final differ in the United States and Japan?

RQ2: What was the global effect of the 2015 Women’s World Cup final match between Japan and the United States?

Significance

It is a concise belief between the researchers that this study will have a social impact. Social impact, by the understanding of the researchers, is to make a change. As the world continues to evolve, people continuously rely on media for information. People over time will actively watch games rather than hear about them in passing. Women’s sports are on an incline in popularity; eventually this would lead to more people taking an active role in voicing their support for female athletes via Twitter, Instagram, or contributing to a newspaper. The lasting social impact of studying media on the 2015 Women’s World Cup final match between Japan and the United States is that with time this analysis will be used as predecessor for future more successful games featuring women.

The research topic is hoping to be a tool that will help make more women’s matches become high-profiled. The findings of this research may enable women’s matches to become more high-profiled. This research has proven media plays an effective role in today’s society as people are getting news from various sources. This means because more people are watching TV, reading on a tablet or searching social media via cell phones then it is highly likely promoters are getting there information out faster. Sports promoters can use these tools to cover all angles of games (and future World Cups) and provide a play by play of what is happening on the field; based on the usage of language or pictures old and new fans alike will be drawn to watch these matches live.

This research is important as it provides a template for increasing TV viewership, not only sports. If marketing technicians wish to see higher views, they like Japanese and American media outlets should ensure their content is available on multiple devices, languages, and in the case of television, capable of catching the attention of mainstream channels.

Methodology

The coverage we have now is not what it once was. There has been a significant emphasis on the coverage of women’s soccer in the last decade focusing on several international games, tournaments, World Cup’s, and Olympic Games but in this case particularly on FIFA 2015 Women’s World Cup final. Aside from examining Japan’s women’s soccer team [or national soccer team] and the differences between Japan’s team, their media coverage, social media presence (Twitter and Instagram) with that of the United States, this study will conduct a qualitative content analysis on the Women’s World Cup final between Japan and the United States.

In a country where the media’s coverage on a sport varies; depending on the sport, its overall popularity, and advancement [or success in a tournament and wins] will determine the amount, quality, and type of exposure the sport will get. The content analysis is appropriate for this topic in that it compares the two women’s soccer teams [Japan and United States] and the type of coverage they had for the 2015 World Cup final. Then it compares the team’s media coverage in both their home country and rival country [who they play against] along with the similarities and differences between the two from its coverage, headlines, font size, length of the stories, and usage of pictures in the media.

The content analysis methodology specifically focuses on qualitative, which it describes the “content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts” (Frey & Kreps, 1999). It is also important to consider the types of texts that are being analyzed; this will allow us to better understand them. The research was conducted by analyzing the use of pictures (action shot or posed), use of language (opinions or facts), and the types of coverage throughout ten articles per newspaper (U.S. newspaper “The Washington Post” vs. Japanese newspaper “The Japan Times”) found throughout the tournament and final game.

The use of images, language, and types newspapers as a form of coverage in the 2015 Women’s World Cup and final varied between the U.S. and Japan. For the USWNT, the use of images as coverage was a mix of both action shots and posed. The actions shots were comprised of

players scoring goals, corner kicks, going for headers or formulating passes and plays. While, the posed shots were either individual, team or trophy pictures, which was the case for Lloyd with the Golden Ball award. Where as, Nadeshiko used mainly action shots. Both the USWNT and Nadeshiko used facts and opinions as a form of coverage. It consisted of soccer related facts such as on the game, players, rivalry, and records; or simply on the editors, commentators, and the team's coaches opinions on the game and players. The team's overall advancement in the tournament and success in the final determined the headlines, font size, and length of stories produced for the USWNT and Nadeshiko. One thing remained the USWNT and Nadeshiko had a profound respect for one another no matter where the coverage was found [U.S. newspapers or Japan newspapers].

Findings

Research Question 1

This paper attempted to find out how media coverage impacted the Women's World Cup of 2015. To achieve this, there needed to be an analysis of the final game from the perspectives of Japan and the United States. As expected, the coverage's from both countries were different in some aspects and varied in others. The U.S. was shown to have heavily marketed the USWNT from beginning of the tournament to their win and after the World Cup was over. The U.S. marketed the women's team as "America has a score to settle," which allowed commercials to be a highlight reel of the U.S. team. In the states, online newspapers were more interactive by having a comment section for fans to share their opinions on game strategy, players and teams. Most articles during the finals from the United States were positive, showing respect and praise to both the USWNT and Nadeshiko. Media coverage in the States, by being available on various devices, were able to reach an astronomical amount of views, specifically when compared to the men's 2014 U.S. viewership. Media coverage posted after the U.S. win tended to have more pictures of the USWNT, some even including videos of fans reactions.

The finding for showed media coverage while important did not heavily impact the 2015 Women's World Cup. It should be assumed however, if Japan would have focused more on promoting Nadeshiko the number of people watching the game would have increased. More so, Japanese media coverage was shown to be lacking severely (when compared to the U.S.) because of weather damages. It was founded that media in Japan does not glorify losing. Japanese, newspapers was more likely to use a picture of the USWNT winning than to include pictures of Nadeshiko in defeat. The U.S. media coverage, however, did not reciprocate; media in the states often featured pictures of crying Japanese fans. In addition, unlike the U.S. online newspapers, Japan's media outlets did not include a comment section for fans. The media coverage style in Japan was found to be more fact-based and less flattery whereas in the United States, articles often had a more arrogant appeal. Nevertheless, overall both countries media outlets showed genuine respect to their opposition despite the lack of actual coverage given to the other team. The findings for research question one showed if given the proper attention Women's World Cup viewership in the United States could continue to grow.

Research Question 2

Research question two was an attempt to understand 2015 Women's World Cup final and the effect it had on the world. To answer this the researchers analyzed the aftermath of the Women's World Cup. It was found that the final game between Nadeshiko and the USWNT led to an unexpected rise in viewership. This is important, globally, because it showed with proper coverage, any women's sport can become high-profiled. In addition, the finals proved more business need to invest in women's soccer, it is noted throughout intensive research the Women's World Cup was hardly sponsored by big name brands. The game was targeted towards women yet, it was found that more men watched in the U.S., this shows marketing for future games in US media needs to be gender neutral. By doing so, perhaps more women would be enticed to watch. The same could be applied to Japan, where it was found more

women watched. The biggest effect of the Japan vs. United States match is that it proved Nadeshiko and the USWNT teams evolution inevitably led to the biggest soccer match in women's history.

Conclusion and Discussion

During the 2015 Women's World Cup final the stakes were higher than ever especially with the USWNT and Nadeshiko meeting yet again. However, this time they were ready to settle the score once and for all. Although, both teams' reputations were on the line throughout our research there were no negative comments on the either the USWNT or Nadeshiko team tactics, and strategies. Instead, there were positive comments about the respect both teams had for one another and responses that indicated there would soon be a rematch, in which the rivalry would continue to surpass time.

There was an increase in viewership expansion found before, during, and after the 2015 World Cup. Before the tournament kick off both the USWNT and Nadeshiko were being promoted through friendly matches and on (U.S. or Japan) national television shows. During the tournament both the USWNT and Nadeshiko received post-match interviews with the teams, their players and coaches about the game. The U.S. emerged victorious and congratulations were in order. The team received admiring messages on social media from celebrities and even an invite from the then President of the United States Barack Obama to come to the White House. Meanwhile, Nadeshiko immediately returned back to Japan only to start training merely four weeks after the World Cup final for the 2015 East Asian Football Federation Cup (EAFF) in China.

The coverage of the 2015 Women's World Cup final not only varied between teams but countries. The U.S. and Japanese newspapers variation in coverage laid in their headlines, font, size, the length of the stories, and pictures. The headlines for the U.S. newspapers were more elaborate and longer compared to Japan's that were straight to the point and more empathetic. For the most part both the U.S. and Japan's newspapers font size was kept standard. The lengths of the stories in the U.S. were different than those in Japan. In the U.S. they tended to be an average length as well as an inclusion of fan reactions. In terms of pictures, we see a difference between the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. had large images in their coverage and a variation between action shots and posed pictures. Meanwhile, Japan was limited with only a few pictures and them being strictly posed. Japan's lack of pictures is directly correlated with the teams overall failure to win at the World Cup. Furthermore, the 2015 Women's World Cup brought technological advances to the tournament with an active presence of USWNT and Nadeshiko on social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram. This enabled the audience to interact with the teams. By posting pictures and tweeting fans were able to show their support for the team, acquire the latest game highlights, and goals.

For the most part our findings did not differ from previous research. Our research has impacted the identity of these two teams; how they are viewed, and appeal to the audience. This game proved many things: one of those being that women's soccer in general and at a global platform event like the Women's World Cup drew an increase in viewership and that with the right marketing and sponsors women's soccer can be just as successful as the men's. The results can be used for self-promoting purposes whether that is for the Women's World Cup, women athletes, and or individual teams.

The findings of this analysis on the 2015 Women's World Cup have set the foundation for a broader study on the soccer community locally and globally and as well as how certain teams receive more coverage and are more important than others. The analysis also suggests differentiations in coverage based on the teams and their overall success in the tournament. The use of technology and the role we play in the media coverage through the usage of platforms (Twitter, Instagram) we as individuals whether fans and or viewers are obtaining a better understanding of what is happening, why it's happening, and what we can do to change this hegemonic sports culture and its coverage.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Sandhya Rao and Dr. Vanessa de Macedo Higgins Joyce for their assistance and guidance on this paper.

Funding

This work has been supported by the Texas State University- Center for International Studies.

Conflict of Interest: none declared.

References

- Bieler, D. (2015, July 05). Women's World Cup: U.S. defeats Japan, 5-2, wins tournament for first time since 1999. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2015/07/05/previewing-the-womens-world-cup-final-usa-vs-japan/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1e8ed0ec2246#/2
- Brasor, P. (2011, July 31). Nadeshiko Japan show that a relaxed approach gets the best results. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2011/07/31/national/media-national/nadeshiko-japan-show-that-a-relaxed-approach-gets-the-best-results/#.WTN3rwbIU>
- Brettman, A. (2015, April 24). Women's World Cup small part of larger women's campaigns for sports-apparel companies. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2015/04/womens_world_cup_s_hould_have_i.html
- Brewer, J. (2015, July 04). U.S. women's team wants to keep its hard-fought soccer tradition alive. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/dcunited/us-womens-team-wants-to-keep-its-hard-fought-soccer-tradition-alive/2015/07/04/6e241608-2264-11e5-aeb9-a411a84c9d55_story.html?utm_term=.468bf2762640
- Burch, L., Billings, A., & Zimmerman, M. (2017). Comparing American soccer dialogues: social media commentary Surrounding the 2014 US men's and 2015 US women's World Cup teams. *Sport In Society*, 1-16. doi:10.1080/17430437.2017.1284811
- Coche, R. (2016). Promoting women's soccer through social media: how the US federation used Twitter for the 2011 World Cup. *Soccer & Society*, 17(1), 90-108.
- Cooley, C., Messner, M. A., & Musto, M. (2015). "It's Dude Time!". *Communication & Sport*, 3(3), 261-287. doi:10.1177/2167479515588761
- Davie, G. (2014, February 18). Framing Theory. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/framing-theory/>
- FIFA. (2015a, July 06). A tournament that broke all records. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <http://www.fifa.com/womensworldcup/news/y=2015/m=7/news=a-tournament-that-broke-all-records-2661554.html>
- FIFA. (2015b, July 05). FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015 Match Statistics. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from http://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/tournament/competition/02/66/12/93/eng_52_0705_usa-jpn_fulltime.pdf
- FIFA. (2015c, July 07). World Cup Final smashes TV records in US, Japan. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <http://www.fifa.com/womensworldcup/news/y=2015/m=7/news=world-cup-final-smashes-tv-records-in-us-japan-2661775.html>
- FIFA TV. (2015, July 05). *Japan REACTION - Post Match Press Conference - Norio SASAKI (JPN)* [Video File] Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZMu0uc-xMM&app=desktop>
- Fox. (Producer). (2015, July 05). *Women's World Cup Final: USA vs. Japan - FIFA Women's World Cup 2015 Highlights* [Video file]. Retrieved March 1, 2018, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_1PwHRpAM
- Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (1999). *Investigating Communication: an Introduction to Research Methods* [2nd Edition]. 1. Pearson. Retrieved March 01, 2017, from http://mason.gmu.edu/~afinn/html/teaching/courses/f03_comm250/fbk_chapter09.pdf
- Goff, S. (2015, May 20). What you need to know about TV coverage of 2015 Women's World Cup. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/soccer-insider/wp/2015/05/20/what-you-need-to-know-about-tv-coverage-of-2015-womens-world-cup/?utm_term=.e83701fe89fc
- Halloran, J. D. (2013, April 23). The Rise and Rise of the United States Women's National Team. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1614739-the-rise-and-rise-of-the-united-states-womens-national-team>
- Harwell, D. (2015, July 06). Why hardly anyone sponsored the most-watched soccer match in U.S. history. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/07/06/the-sad-gender-economics-of-the-womens-world-cup/?utm_term=.0663e16c7818
- Hayes Sauder, M., & Blaszk, M. (2018). 23 Players, 23 Voices: An Examination of the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team on Twitter During the 2015 World Cup. *CommunicationAndSport*, 6(2), 175-202. doi:10.1177/2167479516685579
- Japan reaches Womens World Cup final after late own goal sinks England. (2015, July 02). Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/07/02/soccer/womens-world-cup/japan-reaches-womens-world-cup-final-late-goal-sinks-england/#.Wpc1JmWCzww>
- Jensen, R. W. (2016). Did the World Watch the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup? A Comparative Analysis of TV Viewing Trends in the USA and Globally. Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of the Society for Global Business & Economic Development (SGBED) Global Connectivity, Knowledge and Innovation for Sustainability and Growth: New Paradigms of Theory and Practice, 850-858. doi:10.1107/s0021889807007704/kk5009sup1.cif
- Jfa_en (@jfa_en). (2018, April 09). Retrieved April 11, 2018, from https://twitter.com/jfa_en?ref_src=twsrc=google|twcamp=serp|twgr=author
- JFA open official Instagram account. (2015, June 05). Retrieved March 01, 2018, from http://www.jfa.jp/eng/football_family/news/00006356/
- Kantar Sport. (2017). *FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015 Television Audience Report*, 2-54. <http://journal.ru/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/a-2017-023.pdf>. doi:10.18411/a-2017-023
- Magowan, A. (2015, July 01). Womens World Cup semi-final: Japan v England - key battles - BBC Sport. Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <http://www.bbc.com/sport/football/33339675>
- McKirdy, A. (2015a, June 15). Japan has room for improvement at Women's World Cup. Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/06/15/soccer/womens-world-cup/japan-room-improvement-womens-world-cup/#.WpczE2WCzww>
- McKirdy, A. (2015b, July 07). Nadeshiko reflect on World Cup journey after return to Japan. Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/07/07/soccer/womens-world-cup/team-reflects-world-cup-journey-return-japan/#.Wpiw3WVCzww>
- MLS. (2015a, July 06). Women's World Cup: USWNT win over Japan sets ratings records as massive US TV audience tunes in. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <https://www.mlssoccer.com/post/2015/07/06/womens-world-cup-uswnt-win-over-japan-sets-ratings-records-massive-us-tv-audience>
- MLS. (2015b, September 26). USWNT head coach Jill Ellis unveils 23-player roster for 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.mlssoccer.com/post/2015/04/14/uswnt-head-coach-jill-ellis-unveils-23-player-roster-2015-fifa-womens-world-cup>
- Murphy, P. (2015). Women's World Cup 2015 TV schedule: US vs. Japan in Sunday's final. *The Christian Science Monitor*.
- Murray, C. (2015, July 05). Women's World Cup 2015 final: what USA need to do to beat Japan. Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2015/jul/05/womens-world-cup-final-what-usa-need-to-do-to-beat-japan>
- Orlowitz, D. (n.d.). Japan Football Association gives preferential treatment to Under-23 men over Nadeshiko in flight seating scandal. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <http://www.goal.com/en/news/3688/japan/2012/07/06/3223779/japan-football-association-gives-preferential-treatment-to-under-23-men-over-nadeshiko-in-flight-seating-scandal>
- Pedersen, P.M. (2002a). Investigating Interscholastic Equity on the Sports Page: A Content Analysis of High School Athletics Newspaper Articles. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 19, 419-432.
- Reigning champion Japan counting on experience at Women's World Cup. (2015, June 06). Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/06/06/soccer/womens-world-cup/champs-japan-counting-on-experience-at-womens-world-cup/#.WpcwKWWCzww>
- Reuters. (2015a, July 05). U.S. coach hails Japan's 2011 triumph as 'watershed moment' for women's soccer. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/07/05/soccer/womens-world-cup/u-s-coach-hails-japans-2011-triumph-watershed-moment-womens-soccer/#.WuArqS-ZNZ1>
- Reuters. (2015b, July 06). Tears in Tokyo as Japan thumped in World Cup final Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-soccer-women-final-japan-reaction/tears-in-tokyo-as-japan-thumped-in-world-cup-final-idUSKCN0PG0B720150706>
- SI. (2015). Hashflags, handles and more: Twitter and the 2015 Women's World Cup. Sports Illustrated.Com, N.PAG.
- Team USA in the FIFA Women's World Cup. (2015, June 07). Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/sports/womens-world-cup-teamusa/>
- The History of the FIFA Corporate Mark (2011). 2, 1-4. Retrieved April 8, 2018, from <http://www.centrostudisport.it/PDF/FIFA/133.pdf>
- Tuggle, C.A. (1997). Differences in Television Sports Reporting of Men's and Women's Athletics: ESPN, SportsCenter and CNN Sports 3 Tonight. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 41 (1), 14-25.
- U.S. dominates Japan in Women's World Cup final. (2015, July 06). Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2015/07/06/soccer/womens-world-cup/u-s-dominates-japan-womens-world-cup-final/#.WpczHWVCzww>

- U.S. Soccer WNT (@ussoccer_wnt). Instagram photos and videos. (2015, July 5). Retrieved April 11, 2018, from https://www.instagram.com/ussoccer_wnt/
- U.S. Soccer. (2015a, July 5). One More: USA Set to Face Japan for World Cup Glory. Retrieved April 17, 2018, from <https://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2015/07/05/09/56/150705-wnt-v-jpn-game-notes>
- U.S. Soccer. (2015b, July 5). Rematch Set: Japan In Focus. Retrieved April 17, 2018, from <https://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2015/07/05/09/34/150705-wnt-v-jpn-japan-in-focus>
- U.S. Soccer. (2017, August 02). Five Things To Know About Japan. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <https://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2017/08/02/21/49/20170802-feat-wnt-five-things-to-know-about-japan>
- Velasco, S. (2015). US Women's World Cup victory shatters soccer TV records. *The Christian Science Monitor*.
- Wagner, L. (2015, October 27). Obama To U.S. Women's Soccer Team: 'Playing Like A Girl Means You're A Badass'. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/10/27/452260571/obama-to-u-s-womens-soccer-team-playing-like-a-girl-means-youre-a-badass>
- Where to view the Women's World Cup final in the Tokyo area. (2015, July 03). Retrieved March 01, 2018, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/best-of-city-guide/2015/07/best-of-places/where-to-view-the-womens-world-cup-final-in-the-tokyo-area/#.Wpc0d2WCzww>
- Williams, J. (2002). SIR NORMAN CHESTER CENTRE FOR FOOTBALL RESEARCH Women and Football Fact Sheet No. 5. Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, 1-17. Retrieved April 10, 2018, from <http://www.furd.org/resources/fs5.pdf>
- Women's World Cup: Japan reacts with sadness and pride. (2015, July 06). Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33405105>